

Cultural Convergence:

On the Interactions Between Euro-Christians and Muslims in The Early Modern Period

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Abstract:

In the Early Modern Period, intellectual, technological, and scientific revolutions in Europe have begun to secure the dominance of the “West.” Rather than launch another violent and expensive crusade, many European sovereigns decided to compete and expand in the markets of the “East” (the world of Islam) by launching massive missionary and conversion projects with the aid of the Roman Catholic Church vis-à-vis its Congregation de Propaganda Fide. The missions had the ostensible goal of eradicating the “heathen” religions of Islam and other Eastern Christian sects. However, the Capuchin monks, in particular, succeeded instead in gaining influence over the populace of marginal citizens in the Turkish Empire, thereby opening Middle Eastern markets to Europe. At the time of these projects, many missionaries and Euro-Christian theologians gained insight into Muslim religion and culture, resulting in different accounts that either eased or antagonized the tenuous relationship between East and West. On the other hand, in the late 1700s, the Moroccan king, Sidi Muhammad, sent his diplomat al-Miknāsī to learn the ways, customs, and technology of his powerful, European neighbors with the primary goal of establishing diplomatic ties. These two concatenated phenomena demonstrate the complicated dynamics between Euro-Christians and Muslims. I argue in my research that conversion and intercultural experiences from these two different accounts were inextricable from imperial expansion and colonization efforts.

The history of conversion in the Western Christian world is inextricably woven to the modern history of empire. Indeed, by the 18th century, the “West” underwent technological and scientific revolutions that secured its global and economic dominance. Through such dramatic changes and expansion, the Western world encountered new peoples, cultures, and religions. At the same time, the West had to reevaluate its position to already-known worlds. We see such a phenomenon in Bernard Heyberger’s work, *Les chrétiens du proche-orient* (“The Christians of the Middle East”): “...[L’]époque que nous parcourons marque le passage définitif de la ‘croisade’ à la ‘mission,’ de la lutte contre l’infidèle à la colonization, sous forme de ‘protection’ ou de ‘protectorat.’”¹ (“The period [16th – 18th] which we follow marks a definitive transition from the ‘crusade’ to the ‘mission,’ from the battle against the infidel to colonization, under the form of ‘protection’ or of the ‘protectorate.’”²)

Conversion plays a significant role in how the West dealt with both the Americas and, our primary subject matter, the “East.” Unlike the former, Western Europe already had a long history with Islam and non-Europeans of the Mediterranean world. This complex geographic region held an even more diverse plethora of peoples and Christianities. Conversion was thus necessary for the West as a new approach for interacting with Eastern Christians and Muslims. However, certain factors (which I will elaborate on) made the conversion process unsuccessful in the sense that the missionaries, particularly the Franciscans, were seeking to convert educated religious scholars and leaders, which resulted in heated and inconclusive debates. Such phenomena

¹ Bernard Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du proche-orient: au temps de la réforme catholique* (Paris: École française de Rome, 1994), 8.s

² I cite French texts alongside my own translations. I would like to thank Professor Sean Killackey for verifying the accuracy of my translations.

help edify our understanding on how these heterogeneous groups grappled with their religious *and* cultural differences.

My research involves the comparison of two different intercultural experiences – a Muslim in a European world, and European missionaries in the Middle East. While they are not all tied to conversion, they reveal how the non-West coped with disparities in technology and medicine. On the other hand, Europeans knew of their advantage as the “colonizer,” but they also had to contrive sophisticated and ideological methods of conversion that required knowledge of their subject’s culture. Both groups show the importance of technological advances, intellectual movements, and imperial expansion in controlling peripheral or non-dominant religious sects.

A Look Into *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World*

My research project began with Professor Nabil Matar’s *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World*, which is a translation of Muhammad ibn ‘Uthmān al-Miknāsī’s 18th-century travelogue. As a traveller, al-Miknāsī’s sole purpose is to give a detailed account of the foreign countries he visited. There were no agendas of conversion from the Moroccan guest or from his European hosts. In the times both cultures clashed, it was not due to a heated theological debate. Rather, their minor and infrequent conflicts were the inevitable outcome of “...his [al-Miknāsī’s] inability to understand the new inventions and social codes....”³ Still, al-Miknāsī’s primary mission is to ransom Moroccan slaves in the name of his sovereign, Sidi Muhammad. It was necessary for him to make “empirical” observations and learn about the “new inventions and social codes”

³ Nabil Matar, *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 3

to facilitate negotiations and relay detailed information back to his king, a reformer and “bibliophile.”⁴ As such, al-Miknāsī’s account is pivotal to any understanding of the complexities of intercultural relations and international diplomacy.

The image below (see figure 1) is one of the three maps I constructed for the translation project.⁵ In this first journey, it is clear from the routes that al-Miknāsī visited cities that were formerly under the Umayyad Caliphate, namely Seville, Cordoba, Granada, and Toledo.⁶ The unique aspect of this journey is that our ambassador visited remnants of Islam’s more powerful days, and he very clearly laments their appropriation and ruination in the hands of Spain, now a powerful nation-state in the Western world. During his stay in Seville, al- Miknāsī gave a brief history to explain the Christians’ wall engravings written in Arabic:

There is a vast amount of Arabic writing, in prose and verse calligraphy, on the walls and in the rest of palace, all done by the plasterer and the carver. The aforementioned sultan who ordered the construction of the lateral sides was a Christian called Pedro son of Alfonso son of Herrando son of Sancho son of Alfonso son of Herrando, king of Castile. This despot reigned in al-Andalus during the time of Prince Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn Ismā‘īl ibn Faraj, commander of the faithful, and one of the Nasride kings, because Seville was in Christian hands then.⁷

Because the house was preserved and maintained, al-Miknāsī’s refrained from giving a harsh censure. He provides a lineage of the Christian kings without a condemnation akin to those scattered in the book when he met disagreeable Christians or saw the defacement of Muslim monuments and buildings. For instance, his visit to a poorly maintained

⁴ Matar, *An Arab Ambassador*, 4

⁵ Map base courtesy of *Google Maps*. I then used the program, *Photoshop CS6*, to erase a majority of the modern borders, rename city names and bodies of water according to 18th-century Arabic nomenclature. I based the drawing of the routes on the roads and cities al-Miknāsī mentions in his text.

⁶ Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (New York/Boston: Grand Central Publishing, 1991), 470.

⁷ Matar. *An Arab Ambassador*, 39

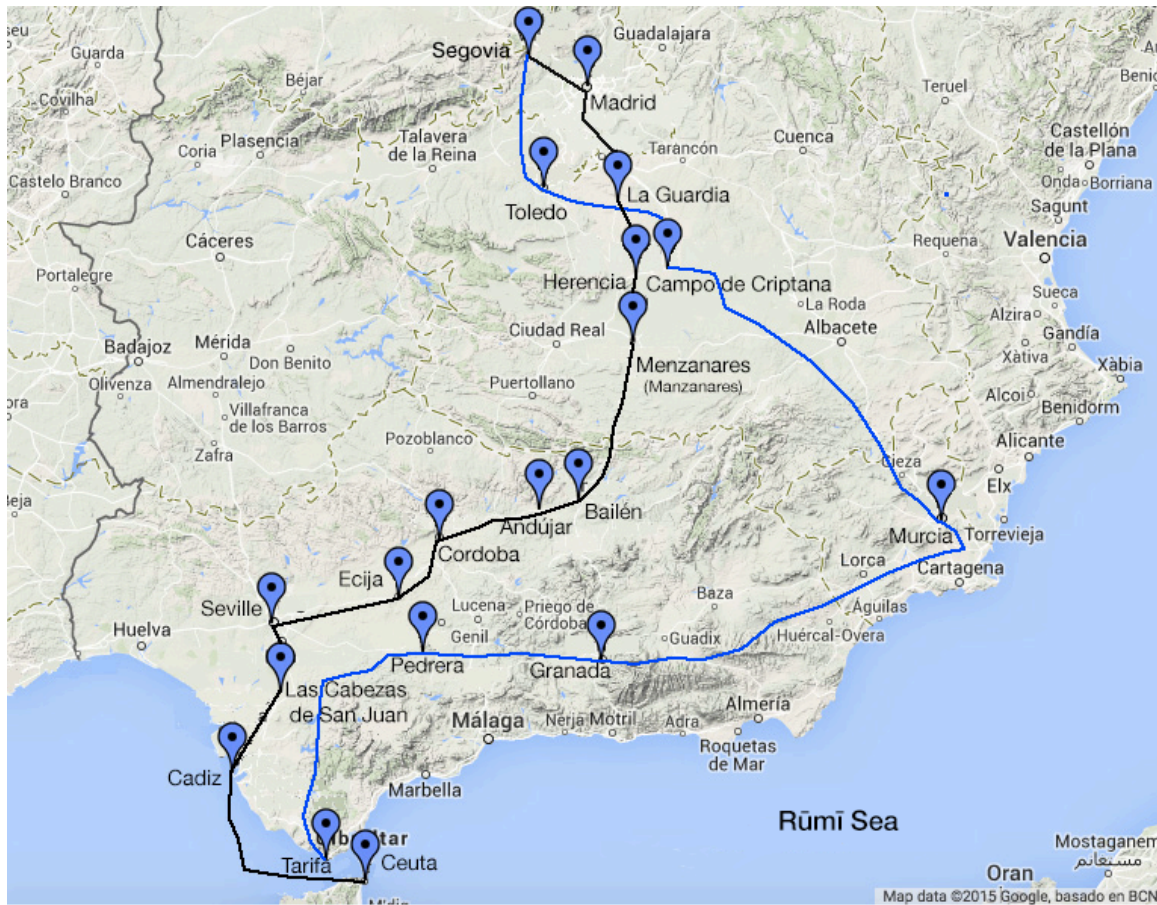


Figure 1

mosque in Seville elicited a very different response:

But the infidels who lived there had soiled it with their urine and dirt, creating such a stench that it was impossible for a human being to climb without covering his nose. May God cleanse the land of them and make them our captives. We belong to God, and to Him we shall return [Q 2:156].⁸

Al-Miknāsī's oscillation between these two tones captures the complex situation of being a Muslim ambassador in the European world. There were many instances of contradiction or disrespect against his faith (i.e. the dirtiness of a mosque) that provoked his anger. The

⁸ Matar. *An Arab Ambassador*, 40.

former mosque – soiled from years of poor maintenance – was just one of the many signs of Euro-Christian seizure and appropriation of formerly Muslim buildings and lands.

While al-Miknāsī’s feelings of disdain or anger to some Christian behavior is inevitable, there are also unique moments in al-Miknāsī’s travelogue that show his flexibility in regards to another culture’s social mores and norms. In his second journey to Naples (mapped below, see figure 2), al-Miknāsī had an experience of “falling in love,” as the travelogue’s translator Nabil Matar noted in his introduction.⁹ During



Figure 2

his stay in Naples, al-Miknāsī was invited to watch an opera for the first time. He was truly in awe of the performance’s execution and design. He meticulously recorded the transpirations and details of the evening, but it is clear from his writing that he was impressed and that he appreciated the aesthetic display of the opera’s scenes. Al-Miknāsī writes in his travelogue: “All was the work of the imagination except the human beings: they were real. And if you could see how they presented a battle scene at sea with sailing

⁹ Matar. *An Arab Ambassador*, 19.

ships and horses on land: it was stunning.”¹⁰ These moments characterize what Matar calls al-Miknāsī’s more “empirical” moments in that he truly recorded what he had observed, and part of that observation constituted his subjective experience of such events.

The more interesting part of the evening, however, began and ended with his infatuation with an opera singer. As I mentioned, al-Miknāsī had fallen in love. In the first journey in Spain, al-Miknāsī was perplexed that women were allowed to be in the presence of other men in public.¹¹ Now his previous and current exposure to Euro-Christian customs allowed him a moment of emotional vulnerability. Al-Miknāsī struggled between allowing himself the human temptation of romantic attraction and staying true to Islamic principles of decency: “Having seen how wondrous she was, I started looking secretly at her as if she were my creed. I prayed for safety and liberation from her trap.”¹² He continued expressing, as if in a confessional, distress at enjoying her beauty. Eventually, al-Miknāsī asked his host for permission to leave the opera, so that he may be free from “the snares of passion and possession.” This episode is significant for it is another moment of honesty, or of the empirical observation al-Miknāsī gives of his Christian hosts. While his religious beliefs perhaps prevented him from enjoying or accepting his infatuation, his admiration of both the singer and the play are proof of improving intercultural interactions.

Al-Miknāsī’s travelogue was not a missionary project, but it reveals similar details and reactions from both sides of the cultural divide. My reading of this text produced the three maps used for Nabil Matar’s translation, *An Arab Ambassador in the*

¹⁰ Matar. *An Arab Ambassador*, 109.

¹¹ Matar. *An Arab Ambassador*, 14.

¹² Matar. *An Arab Ambassador*, 111.

Mediterranean World (Map 1 and Map 2 pictured above, see map 3 in “Works Cited and Bibliography”). At the same time, al-Miknāsī’s travelogue provides a comparison for the next section, in which I discuss missionaries in the Middle East. It is important to keep in mind that the situations are not entirely the same. Apart from differences in time and place, Al-Miknāsī conducted his voyages with the hopes of establishing amicable relations while still maintaining his Muslim identity and authority as a Moroccan ambassador. His encounter of Euro-Christian inventions and culture demonstrates the results of intercultural relations among equals, or at least among men who do not have a project of colonization. In the section, I discuss the results of such projects.

Missionaries in The Middle East

In June 22, 1622, the Holy See established the Congregation de Propaganda Fide, cementing the Roman Catholic Church’s dedication in its Counter-Reformation efforts.¹³ Monseigneur Peter Guilday, a historian of the Catholic Church, describes its purpose and mission: “[It] was to regain the faithful in all those parts of the world where Protestantism had been established, and to bring the light of the true faith to heathen lands.”¹⁴ While the Counter-Reformation came about in the wake of Protestantism on the continent and in England, the Pope had also established La Propagande¹⁵ to rejuvenate missionary efforts in the Levant (see map, Figure 3). In place of an expensive and violent crusade, the Catholic Church handled and oversaw the settlement of Capuchin and Franciscan friars to regain the Holy Land from Islam and to “save” (what they saw as) the wayward Eastern

¹³ Peter Guilday, “The Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide,” in *The Catholic Historical Review* 6, no. 4 (1921): 479.

¹⁴ Guilday, “The Sacred Congregation,” 480.

¹⁵ Henceforth, I will be referring to the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide by “La Propagande” as coined by Heyberger to emphasize its involvement with French missions in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Christian sects, the majority of which Heyberger groups under “les Chrétiens de Syrie” (Syrian Christians).¹⁶

From 1623 – 1626 the Capuchins settled an area of the Middle East spanning Aleppo to the coastal cities of Saida and Beirut. At that point, the Capuchins extended their monastery works to the care and education of their non-Catholic parishioners. In 1700, Anglican missionaries set up schools in Oxford to attract potential converts who were interested in receiving a European education. To which the French ministry of Louis XIV wrote to the Échevins of Marseille:

Sur les avis que le roi a eu que les anglais fondaient à Oxford un collège pour élever des jeunes gens qu'ils tiraient du Levant et les instruire dans la religion anglicane, Sa majesté a estimé important, pour ne pas laisser introduire l'hérésie parmi les nations à la conversion desquelles un nombre de missionnaires de ses sujets travaillent, de tirer douze enfants des familles les plus accréditées parmi les arméniens, les grecs, les syriens et les coptes, pour les faire élever dans un collège dans le royaume.¹⁷

(On the opinions that the king had that the English founded a college in Oxford for raising young people whom they brought from the Levant to instruct them in the Anglican religion, his majesty felt it important to not let them introduce heresy among the nations, of which a number of his subject missionaries are working to convert, to recruit 12 children from the most esteemed families among the Armenians, Greeks, Syrians, Copts, to raise them in a college in the kingdom.)

It is clear from this letter that European countries reinvigorated their interests in the Middle East. Both Protestant and Catholic European forces competed for dominance in the broad geographical region identified as “Syrie” (Syria) for it also provided lucrative opportunities. European merchants and trading companies often accompanied missionary settlements. As a matter of fact, La Propagande was unique in the advantages of its direct control over the ecclesiastical hierarchies of local (in the Levant) parishes. In 1719, la

¹⁶ Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 14.

¹⁷ Basile Homsy, *Les Capitulations & La Protection Des Chrétiens Au Proche-Orient Aux XVIe, XVIIe Et XVIIIe Siècles* (Liban: University of Michigan, 1956), 282.

Propagande commanded the Franciscans to establish an order in Latakia, an opportunity “justified” by the influx of European merchants in its port.¹⁸ Since then, the number of Franciscans rapidly increased, rising to 155 Franciscan priests in the “Holy Land” by 1727.¹⁹

Missionaries focused their conversion efforts on Eastern Christians rather than Muslims for reasons beyond their shared nominal identity. Eastern Christians, despite their many differences and divisions, have had a shared marginality. When Islam became the dominant religion and empire, Eastern Christians and Jews had the status of “dhimmî” or “les gens du livre” (people of the book).²⁰ Even though the Muslims treated them with a high level of tolerance to the point of assimilation, their status was that of second-class citizens as a result of a special tax called “jizya.” Many Muslim jurists and scholars even debated to what extent dhimmî-s can enjoy the spiritual rewards of Islam as a result of paying such a tax. Still, as a group in the social periphery, Eastern Christians were more prone to attempts of conversion. In times of sickness, the missionaries tended

¹⁸ Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 274.

¹⁹ Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 286.

²⁰ Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 40.

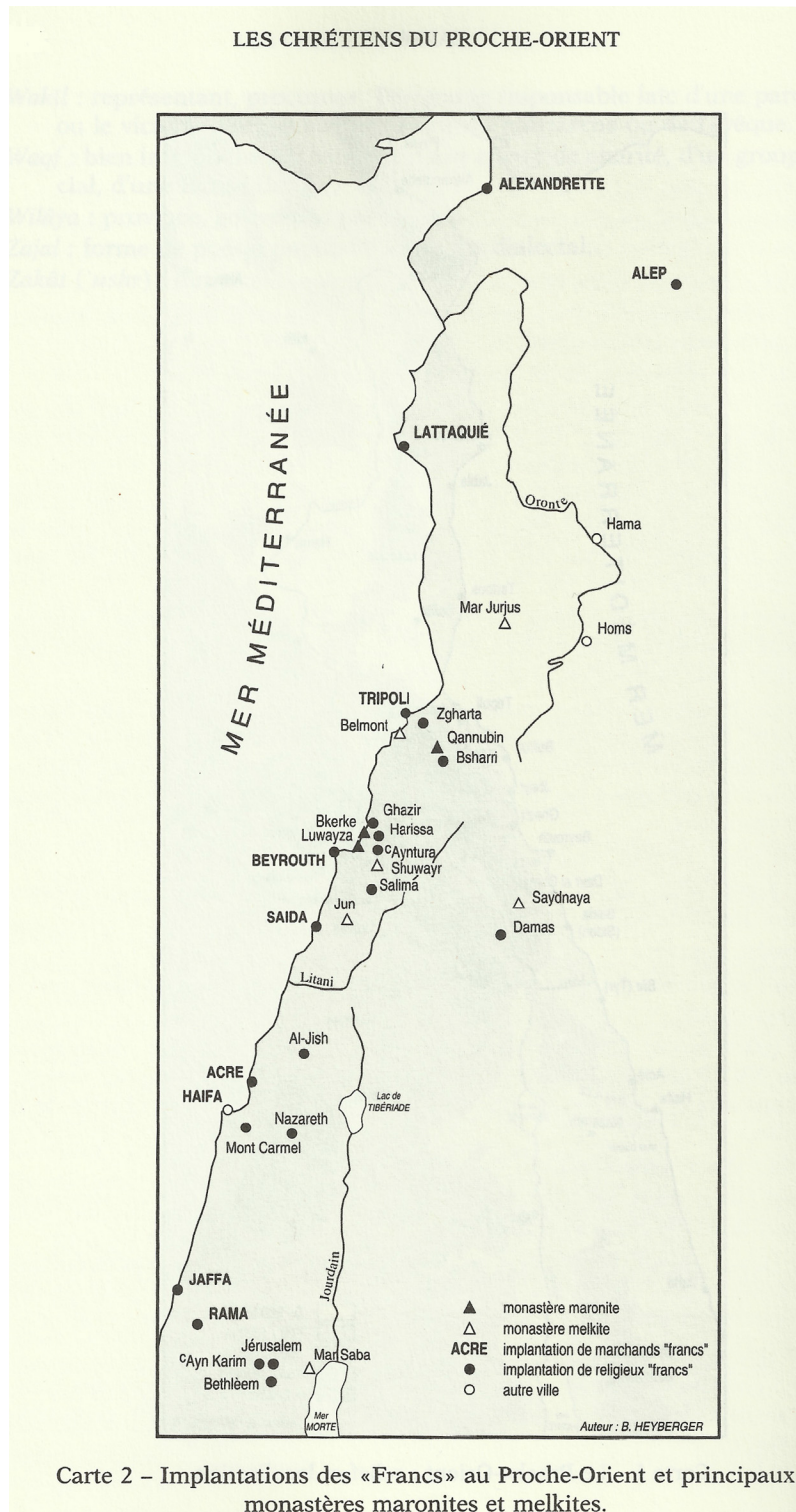


Figure 3 Bernard Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient* (Paris: École française de Rome, 1994), 632.

“Map 2: Settlements of ‘Franks’ in the Middle East and principle monasteries of Maronites and Melkites”

to their Eastern Christian parishioners as if they were “ouailles” (flock).²¹ The Franciscans’ connection to European technology and medicine attracted converts. In 1739, the Jesuits followed their example and baptized sick Muslim children, an event made possible by the desperation of parents. The paucity of adult Muslim converts also pressured missionaries to convert the sick and young, so that they may secure a place for the “innocents” in heaven.²²

The difficulty of converting Muslims posed a different kind of challenge for the missionaries. Because Islam comes from the tradition of Abrahamic monotheism with its own sacred text, missionaries had to study the Qur’an and Muslim practices in order to persuade Muslims into conversion. Such learning is similar to the type of exposure al-Miknāsī had during his voyages in the Euro-Christian world. Two figures, Michel Nau and Michel Febvre, wrote and published pamphlets that expounded on the “nature” of Islam as a way to elevate and secure what they believed was the superiority of Christianity. Both men, however, wrote strikingly different texts. While Febvre wrote a castigating account of Islam as a religion that is inherently opposed to reason, Nau took a less antagonistic approach by simulating a debate governed by reason.²³ Their two accounts are not as “empirical” as al-Miknāsī’s travelogue, especially because they do not write to report to their sovereign as an explication of the culture, environment, and customs of the host society. Their writings are instead juristic tools for other Christians to pass down their knowledge of what they adamantly believe is Islam’s inferiority.

²¹ Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 275.

²² Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 321.

²³ Michel Nau, "Contenant La Verité De La Religion Chretienne," in *L' état Présent De La Religion Mahometane* 2 (Bouillerot: Bavarian State Library, 1684), 4

Michel Nau's *L'Etat présent de la religion mahométane* is a hypothetical conversation and debate between a Christian and Muslim scholar. In his foreword, Nau writes, "Quand on leur rend l'honneur... et qu'on traite avec eux d'un air humble et plein de douceur, ... ils sont accueils à ceux qui leur parlent, ... et ils sont souvent les premiers à faire tomber le discours sur des matières de religion."²⁴ (When one accords them [Muslims] honor ... and treats with them in a humble tone filled with gentleness, ... they are welcoming to those who speak to them, ... and they are often the first to fall into a discussion of religion). Nau's lessons on how to handle conversation when speaking to a Muslim are perhaps a reflection of the utter lack of amity or understanding between the Euro-Christians and the Muslims. For Nau, it is absolutely crucial that one is amicable and educated during these debates to avoid wasting the holy word on "dogs." In the text itself, Nau has a chapter titled "La Religion Chrétienne est justifiée sur plusieurs points, par les textes de l'Alcoran." (The Christian religion is justified on several points by the texts of the Qur'an). It is the fifth "conversation," and in it he criticizes Islam based on the contradictory verses of the Qur'an.

Nau practiced his own counsel and opens the chapter without calumny to introduce his character, Ephrem, and his Muslim opponent Nouredin. Further, Nau takes care to address Nourredin by "vous," a formal second person singular or plural pronoun. The debate ensues when Nourredin questions Ephrem on the Christian practice of eating pork, or the impure meat, and drinking wine, a beverage that takes away one's reason. Ephrem responds: "L'Alcoran vous donne permission d'en user dans le besoin, quand les autres choses vous manquent. ce qui fait voir que ces choses considérées en leur nature

²⁴ Nau, "Contenant la Verité De La Religion Chretienne," 4.

n'ont rien de mauvais.”²⁵ (The Qur'an gives you permission to use of it in need, when other things are lacking for you, which goes to show that these things considered in their essence are not at all bad in and of themselves). Yet, Nau does not cite his Qur'anic source. He instead defends the consumption of wine by citing the Old Testament to contradict the teachings in the Qur'an's "Chapitre d'Amran" (Chapter of Al Imran). He writes, "...[Je] vous enseigne cela en confirmation de l'ancien Testament que j'ai entre les mains, et pourvous [sic] permettre des choses, qui vous étoient défenduës de la part de Dieu, par les articles de la Loi.”²⁶ (I teach you that which is in confirmation of the Old Testament that I have in my hands, and to permit for you the things, which were forbidden to you by God, by the articles of the law). He then gives his Arabic translation of the full passage to argue that the Qur'an expressly allows what the Muslims have, in his view, contradictorily forbidden. Nau's hypothetical debate shows a Christian's willingness to learn and see the similarities between Islam and Christianity. Although he maintains the superiority of his religion (without addressing the faults of the Bible), Nau's text gives a glimpse into the new ways Euro-Christians were identifying with or developing rapport with Muslim scholars and jurists with whom they often shared these debates.

Michel Febvre's text asserts Christian superiority in more blatant ways than Nau. In *Theatre de la Turquie* (Theater of Turkey), he provides a biased history of its beginnings to show that Islam is a "mélange, un amas et un composé de toutes les Religions" (mixture, a heap composed of all religions), which Mohammed created to

²⁵ Nau, "Contenant la Verité De La Religion Chretienne," 175.

²⁶ Nau, "Contenant la Verité De La Religion Chretienne," 177.

seduce many others.²⁷ Like other missionaries, he attacks Islam on the basis of its practice of polygamy and its offer of an overtly sexual paradise. For Febvre, the Islamic belief that Jesus Christ never died on the cross and thus their hatred of the crucifix makes them more similar to Protestants.²⁸ Despite his antagonism towards Islam and Turkish laws, his text shows a surprising amount of knowledge regarding their religious practices. In Article VII, he describes the time of Ramadan, what Muslims do (who is fasting, who is exempted), and when it is practiced. However, his experience could only teach him that Islam is contrary to reason as a religion founded on wars and the thirst for power by a heretic.²⁹

Both Michel Nau and Michel Febvre represent the two extremes of how Christians interacted with Muslims in the diverse region of “Syria” (ambiguously called). Heyberger notes however that these controversial debates often resulted in Muslims reflecting on their similarities with Christians – a gesture that was unfortunately not reciprocated by their Euro-Christian counterparts.³⁰ This stubbornness of Christians and their missionary projects of converting the sick led to the Capuchin’s loss of prestige in the eyes of the Ulemma and Sheiks. Perhaps this is expected when the colonizing project of missionary work attracted the marginal citizens of the Turkish Empire. European medical advances made missionaries associated with spiritual and bodily remedies in times of plague or rampant disease.³¹ The continued presence of Catholic missionaries would soon introduce Eastern Christians to Enlightenment ideals and begin a period of

²⁷ Michel Febvre, “Théâtre De La Turquie ... Traduit D’italien En François, Par Son Auteur Le Sr Michel Febvre” (*Gallica*. 1682), 1.

²⁸ Febvre, “Théâtre De La Turquie,” 24.

²⁹ Febvre, “Théâtre De La Turquie,” 2.

³⁰ Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 325.

³¹ Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 352.

modernization, a movement that provoked a rise of Arab nationalism in the Middle East and North Africa.³²

Conclusion

Muhammad ibn ‘Uthmān al-Miknāsī’s voyages and the missionary projects of the Middle East provide two different accounts of intercultural interactions in the 18th-century. Al-Miknāsī’s diplomatic mission was also a personal realization of his religious and cultural identity in relation to an increasingly Europeanized world – a reality perhaps most evident with the Spanish possession of Andalusian monuments and artifacts. On the other hand, Catholic missions in the Middle East resulted in divisive cross-cultural debates and interactions. The colonizing project of the Euro-Christians and their attempts to have theological discussions with Muslim scholars antagonized the Turks. They attracted Eastern Christians through their knowledge of medicine and as a reprieve from the marginal status they held in the Turkish Empire. The increasing presence of missionaries and the strength of La Propagande made the conversion of “infidels” (their Muslim counterparts) an unsuccessful venture despite their relative success with the Maronites, Melkites, etc. The large body of work dedicated to French missions in the Middle East is largely not translated and thus not discussed in Anglo-American circles. This research is a glimpse into the beginnings of Western global dominance and how Euro-Christians interacted with people whom they saw as inferior or in need of their instruction. That Europe did not launch another crusade proves that the benefits of imperial expansion via cultural and ideological appropriation opened more economic

³² Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 560.

markets. To Euro-Christians, the experience of conversion to Western Christianity was also an experience of modernization.

Works Cited and Annotated Bibliography

Courbage, Youssef, and Philippe Fargues. *Christians and Jews under Islam*. Translated by Judy Mabro. London: Tauris, 1997.

Courbage and Fargues' work centers on the long history between Christians and Jews under various reigns of Islamic rule, which range from the rise of Islam after the death of the Prophet to the 19th-century French colonization of North Africa. The authors discuss different patterns of how Eastern Christians and Jews assimilated to Arabic and eventually Turkish culture. The various periods of change – i.e. during the Crusades and increasing presence of the Franks or the rise of the Turks centuries later – show declines in Christian and Jewish populations after forced conversions. Courbage and Fargues' support their findings with graphs showing changes in population according to religion in the Middle East.

Dawkins, R.M. "The Crypto Christians of Turkey." *Byzantion*, 247-275. Vol. 8. Paris, 1933.

Dawkins' article explores the double lives of "Crypto Christians" of Turkey – particularly in Crete, Cyprus, and other coastal cities of the Mediterranean. Many of these previously Christian territories were forced to undergo conversion to Islam for political and social protection. However, these Christians continued practicing their "true" religion in secret by modifying their homes to have

concealed altars, statues, and rooms in which they could perform religious ceremonies such as weddings. Dawkins argues that it is through Crypto-Christianity that much of proto-Christian and Greek culture survived.

Delanoue, Gilbert. "Vie de Rifā'a (1801-1873)." *Moralistes Et Politiques Musulmans Dans L'Égypte Du XIXe Siècle*. Vol. II. Cairo: Institut Français D'archéologie Orientale, 1982: 384-416.

The chapter of "The Life of Rifā'a" tells the story of celebrated theologian and Egyptologist Rifā'a al-Tahtāwī. He is famous for his work in translating and transmitting knowledge between the Muslim and Euro-Christian world. Sent by Ottoman commander Muhammad 'Alī, Rifā'a studied in Paris. Although many Muslims studied in Europe during the nineteenth century to learn skills in medicine and technology, Rifā'a studied ethics, philosophy, and politics. He is credited for bringing Enlightenment ideals and "modernizing" Egypt.

Febvre, Michel. "Théâtre De La Turquie ... Traduit D'italien En François, Par Son Auteur Le Sr Michel Febvre." *Gallica*. 1682. Accessed March 20, 2015.
<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5824148w>.

The "Théâtre de la Turquie" or the "Theater of Turkey" is a verbose attack on the demerits of Islam based on its theology and practices. It begins with a critique of Islam's history as a religion founded by war and "licentious" practices of its founder and prophet, Muhammad. The rest of the tome discusses Muslim theology in comparison to Christianity, e.g. the types and rewards of afterlife in both religions. Afterwards, Febvre discusses religious practices in Islam such as the practice of Ramadan, dieting habits, and restrictions on women (i.e. the veil).

Febvre concludes that Islam is an inferior copy of Christianity as a mélange of pagan and “savage” cults.

Guilday, Peter. “The Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide.” *The Catholic Historical Review* 6, no. 4 (1921): 478-494.

Guilday’s article is a brief history of the successes and achievements of “The Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide” since its beginnings in the Counter-Reformation movement. He mostly focuses on its success in “the New World,” claiming that it is because of the Propaganda Fide that the United States has had a large albeit minority Catholic population before 20th-century immigrations.

Guilday also outlines the creation of the Propaganda Fide’s policies and agendas, which were implemented for three centuries. Some of these policies include “spiritual” and military intervention.

Heyberger, Bernard. *Les chrétiens du proche-orient: au temps de la réforme catholique*. Paris: École française de Rome, 1994.

Heyberger’s massive work explores the relationships of Christians with Muslims and Euro-Christian missionaries in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. Although Eastern Christians were the minority of the Muslim Empire, many of them enjoyed the dominant culture’s privileges, protections, and even opportunities to “assimilate” via conversion. During the European expansion of the 18th century, Eastern Christians were the primary converts – marking the “disappearance” of large populations of Melkites, Maronites, and other Syrian Christians. Heyberger notes that towards the 19th-century the growing solidarity among Muslims as well as the penultimate moments of Arab nationalism led to the often-violent

expulsions of both missionaries and Eastern Christians. He shows how these disastrous moments are built-up responses to European global dominance. However, his detailed history shows the importance of understanding the new “colonizing” project of the 18th-century, which differentiates these intercultural actions from the more violent Crusades.

Homsy, Basile. “Les missionnaires et les écoles.” *Les Capitulations & La Protection Des Chrétiens Au Proche-Orient Aux XVIe, XVIIe Et XVIIIe Siècles*. Liban: University of Michigan, 1956: 277-284.

Homsy’s work focuses on the “surrender” (literal translation for “capitulation”) or treaties negotiated in the Middle East during the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. These were primarily Franco-Turkish “capitulations” to allow for the protection of French missionaries, settlers, and all Christian churches in the Turkish Empire. The chapter “The missionaries and the schools” talks about the education reform implemented by French and English missionaries in the Middle East and Europe. This program started a campaign in which monks would recruit promising Arab, Egyptian, or Turkish students to study theology, the sciences, and medicine in Paris or Oxford – a practice that would lead to major contributions to Muslim culture such as the first Arabic printing press.

Hourani, Albert. *A History of the Arab Peoples*. New York/Boston: Grand Central Publishing, 1991.

This history is essentially a history of Arab culture, language, and religion (Islam). Beginning with pre-Islam, Hourani describes the nomadic lifestyle and practices of Arab peoples, explaining values that would contribute to the rise and

popularity of Islam in the peninsula. He then details the various caliphates (under the four righteous caliphs) and dynasties (e.g. Umayyad, Abbasid, etc.). This book was important for an understanding of the geographic reaches of Islam, which also had a thriving dynasty in Al-Andalus or modern-day Spain.

Matar, Nabil. *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World: The Travels Of Muhammad ibn 'Uthmān al-Miknāsī*. New York: Routledge, 2015.



Third Journey: The Islamic World 1785 - 1788
Route ———
Return ———

An Arab Ambassador is an abridged translation of al-Miknāsī's three journeys. In order, he traveled through Spain, Sicily, and "The Islamic World" (Istanbul and a pilgrimage to Mecca). This text is important to understand how a Muslim adapted to the culture and technology of non-Muslim or (in the case of the third journey) non-Moroccan cities and their peoples. Al-Miknāsī offers a non-Western perspective and insight onto the events and circumstances of the 18th-century Mediterranean world from quotidian details such as etiquette or playing chess, to topic of ransoming and prolonging good diplomatic ties with non-Muslim sovereigns. His journeys, which were also diplomatic missions, were Sidi

Muhammad's (the Moroccan king) desire to extend peaceful relations with neighboring countries, especially with the Spanish and Neapolitan rulers.

Nau, Michel. "Contenant La Verité De La Religion Chretienne." *L' état Présent De La Religion Mahometane* 2. Bouillerot: Bavarian State Library, 1684.

This text by Nau is the 2nd tome to a long treatise that demonstrates how one should interact and debate with a Muslim. Nau believes that missionaries and other Christian scholars should handle such interactions delicately, because the stark differences between the two religions can cause violent clashes or very hostile rifts. Still, the six conversations explore Islam theologically, and Nau often cites the Qur'an to justify (in his opinion) the superiority of Christianity. For example, the fourth conversation discusses the similarities and differences between their beliefs about Jesus Christ. In the end of the tome, Nau concludes that Muslims must address the hypocrisies and contradictions the Christians have pointed out in order for them to survive in the world outside their homes.